

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

**Dauis Church**  
**Flower**  
**Reason**

Victor Peñaranda

*Philippine Studies* vol. 53, no.2&3 (2005): 419–422

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 30 13:30:20 2008

R. TORRES PANDAN

### **Falling Star**

Sometimes, looking up just  
In time to catch a falling star,  
I'd worry that it is some planet,  
One with friendly gases,  
One with people in it, with houses  
And nice furniture, small children  
And their pets, hurtling toward  
Its fiery doom. And while this planet  
Slipped out of control  
In the empty sky, I'd wonder  
How soon we might share its fate,  
With its late skills in French  
Or basketball or with its vain loves  
Or losses. But yet, this plagues me  
Most of all: would anyone even  
Bother to catch our own brief apparition  
Of dust, forgotten—soon gone—  
And falling across no one else's sky?

VICTOR PEÑARANDA

### **Davis Church**

I strolled to Panglao Island one morning years ago,  
When lanterns of fishers still shone far out at sea,  
And ended up lost in thought near old Davis Church  
Wondering if it was wise to enter without favor,  
To worship its cumulus ceiling of illuminated tales.

I recalled swallows gliding through its open doorways  
Threading eye of my heart with mystifying secrets:

The trapdoor, the hidden well in front of the towering altar.  
There beneath the floor an ancient source of fresh water,  
The sweetest in the whole island, had been sighing for ages  
Waiting for someone to genuflect on that very spot,  
Peak of dry spell, to slake thirst without yielding to baptism.

Among scattered ruins beside limestone shore I lingered  
Heard the wholeness of prayer flowing from the cavernous church:  
They were chanting, luring the dawn with rhythms only heard  
When forests reclaim abandoned fortresses with feral splendor.  
I turned pagan round the radiance of the communion chalice.

(1998)

## Flower

The wind falls behind as our boat touches  
The mouth of a great river known for carving,  
Haunting seascapes after the rainforests died.  
The open sea hesitates then swallow-tails  
Into a maze of mud flats and waterways,  
This delta of boundless wetlands ungoverned  
By outriggers or flocks of migratory birds.  
Each island, exposed by receding tide,  
Offers a riddle for children with bare feet.  
The nipa fronds seem consumed in mystery,  
Wilderness relaxed in my lungs.  
This territory I once called home has lost  
Track of places where desires touch lightning,  
Ghosts haunt the roots of mangroves.  
Names have become elusive as silver eels.

I return bruised with love to reclaim  
Tales locked within the gaze of kingfishers.  
My travels introduced me to new worlds,  
Allowed me to explore the nature  
Of labyrinths where words and objects stray  
Then lose the power of their meanings.

Sorcerers took me into their company.  
 In a city made infamous by traffic gridlock  
 I recovered secrets from ancestral belly,  
 While drivers committed acts of homicide.  
 “Burak,” I whispered at busy junction,  
 And the image of a heron, white as cotton,  
 In a field of black silt, on a lake of blue sky,  
 Sprang to life inside a bus crowded with people  
 Committed to drown in forgetfulness.

As our boat negotiates with the dusk  
 I whisper “burak” to salt-laden breeze.  
 It means “flower,” the name of my coastal village  
 Where ilang-ilang trees once bloomed in cascades,  
 Seducing the righteous to commit infidelities.  
 Childhood caught us gleaning one morning  
 When horses stormed out of a military camp,  
 Racing without riders, wild to the scent of insurgents,  
 Gunfire recoiling in perfumed air.  
 Marooned in a meadow of turtle grasses, my body  
 Became a shore of legends, freight of blue sky,  
 White heron dreaming in burnt-out garbage dump.  
 I whisper the word again and feel a slender moon;  
 Quietly the landscape begins to possess us,  
 Flowering like sea anemones in the speed of light.

(Samar)

## Reasons

I step out of the house,  
 Still warm from breath of cooking,  
 To converse with the breeze . . .  
 Darkness and dewdrops lace  
 The hills of Kalamalamahan.  
 Fireflies reason in pulses.  
 Friends are feasting  
 On fish and rice in the kitchen.

Someone breaks into brittle laughter.  
When I look up the sky  
Stars graze my forehead;  
Entire constellations seem  
Concerned with our modest affairs,  
Exploring reasons  
To keep expanding the universe.  
I hear my name called—  
My turn to wash the dishes.

(Rogongon, Iligan  
2000)

## ALLAN POPA

### Dapithapon

Mula sa pahinang binabasa  
Tumingala ako at pinagmasdan ang daloy  
Ng mga paniki mula sa yungib.

Kasunod nilang umahon  
Ang mga minerong nakayuko sa paglakad  
Na waring kay bigat ng gumagabay na liwanag.

Nang balikan ko ang tula sa aking kandungan,  
Mariing kumapit sa papel ang mga titik  
Na nanganganib mahulog sa bitak  
Sa gitna ng aklat.

Sinalat ko ang isang munting salita  
Upang tumatag pansamantala sa pagkalula.  
Sa sandaling iyon, waring maikukuyom ko sa palad  
Ang lahat ng naghihintay na maunawaan.